

LIFE

Music

Desensitizing Dan Fogelberg

'Sensitive' singer/songwriter is ready to rock

BY PETER JONES

Some guys know just what to say...

Longer than there've been fishes in the ocean,

Higher than any bird ever flew,

Longer than there's been stars up in the heavens,

I've been in love with you.

For the better part of three decades, Colorado's Dan Fogelberg has swooned lovers and strangers with romantic hyperbole, flugelhorn and other tools in his arsenal of soft rock seductions. For many, the mere mention of Fogelberg's name conjures up the standard issue sensitive male... Birkenstocks, a bearded past, and a suspicious understanding of female problems.

"That's always been radio and the press's doing," Fogelberg says of his touchy-feely image. "It certainly doesn't parallel my career. The biggest part of that is that the big hits that I had were real romantic, acoustic type music. But if you look at the rest of the music I've done, I've gone all over the place."

Fogelberg has experimented with bluegrass, world music and jazz, to name just a few. "Twin Sons of Different Mothers," his collaboration with jazz/pop flutist Tim Weisberg, was a Top 10 hit in 1978. Still, like John Denver, the Bee Gees and Monika Lewinsky, it is unlikely Fogelberg will ever be able to upstage his own caricature. He could rob a bank in his underwear and his obituary would still mention his gushy love songs first.

"A lot of times," says Fogelberg, "the biggest response I get, especially from guys who are kind of dragged to these shows by their old ladies, (is), 'I had no idea these guys played rock and roll.' Some of (the women) are put off. Some of

them expect me to be Manilow or Air Supply or something and we're up there rocking and playing blues."

Fogelberg, in fact, has spent so much time on musical experimentation that *Full Circle*, his latest CD, is his first pop album of new material in nearly a decade. For most of the 1990s he dabbled in less commercial idioms, releasing live music and a boxed set along the way.

While the aptly titled *Full Circle* is sure to be popular among old fans, it won't do much for historical revisionists. The CD is a return to form for Fogelberg; indeed, some of the songs originate from his 1970s singer/songwriter heyday.

"In the midst of doing all those other projects," he explains, "I was just cutting tracks and stuff. Most of it turned out to be acoustic songs, so a lot of these songs just got kind of pushed aside. They kept piling up. I kind of said maybe I've got enough for a record here. As I was doing this, I thought 'this is pretty cool. This is starting to feel like one of those old records.'"

In keeping with the back-to-roots feel of the CD, in addition to the nine previously unheard originals on *Full Circle*, Fogelberg covers songs by the Byrds (the title track) and the Turtles, two of the 1960's animal bands that were among his earliest influences as a teenager.

Born in Peoria, Illinois in 1951, Fogelberg learned to play guitar when he was 11. By the time he was 13, he was writing his own material. Among his earliest compositions was a three-chord rocker called "Ride That Train," his obligatory song about rail transportation.

Asks Fogelberg, "What is that about when kids sit down to collaborate on a song when they're 13 or 14 years old, they

write about trains? There's something Freudian in it."

If so, the founder of psychoanalysis wasn't the only bird whispering in Fogelberg's youthful ear. Under the tutelage of future music industry hotshot Irving Azoff, the singer quit college in 1971 and headed for Los Angeles. As fate would have it, he ran out of gas in Estes Park and was stranded penniless for a week.

"I fell in love with Colorado," Fogelberg remembers. "They had beer I could drink (3.2). I could climb the mountains." The transplanted songwriter settled first in Boulder before moving up to Nederland, where he would eventually spend much of his professional and personal time at the now defunct Caribou Ranch recording studio.

"It was all about the seclusion and nurturing of the creative mind," he says. "It was so plush. I mean anything you wanted 24 hours a day, and I mean anything. I'm not going to elaborate."

After Fogelberg's first country-tinged album failed to chart, Azoff made the odd choice of hiring heavy guitar ace Joe Walsh to produce his second, *Souvenirs*, which went double platinum. Then came a decade of hits that cemented Fogelberg's aforementioned reputation: "Longer," "Same Auld Lang Syne" and "Leader of the Band," to name but a few.

Ironically, it is the up-tempo "Language of Love," the singer's skeptical commentary on lousy communication, that Fogelberg says sums up his feelings.

"That's probably more me than 'Longer,'" he quips. "I've been in and out of several marriages and I don't have a particularly rosy or romantic, distorted view of realities of romantic relationships."

"Longer," his signature song of eternal love, was written for wife number one. Two marriages later, Fogelberg pleads not guilty to being a "hopeless romantic."

"Hopeful, yes," he says with a laugh. "Very pragmatic." ♦

Dan Fogelberg will perform July 4 at the Paramount Theatre, 16th and Glenarm. For more information, call 303-623-0106 or visit danfogelberg.com. Contact Peter Jones at pjones@lifemusic@aol.com.



COURTESY OF MORNING SKY PRODUCTIONS

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